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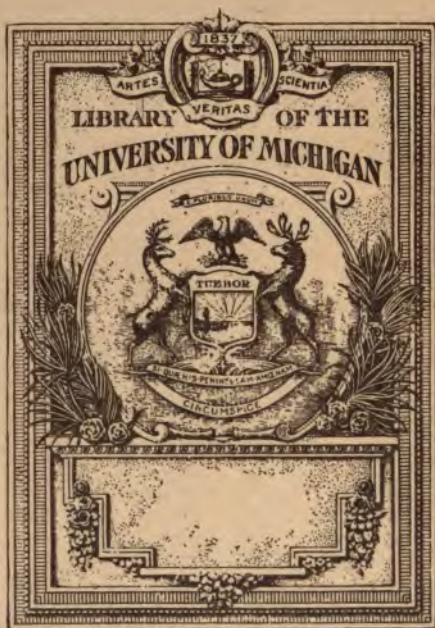
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HINTS TO  
OFFICERS ON GIVING  
COMMANDS



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# HINTS ON THE VOICE IN GIVING COMMANDS

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## HINTS ON THE VOICE IN GIVING COMMANDS

1. **Feel your voice easily and naturally increasing the active retention of breath in the middle of the body.**

Think of the voice as a musical instrument. Every musical instrument has three parts, each discharging a distinct function; that which furnishes the motive power, that which causes the tune, and that which produces the sympathetic vibrations, called tone.

The motive power in the violin is applied by the bow, the length and tension of the strings causes the tune, and the whole instrument is concerned in producing the tone. In the piano the motive power is given by the hammers; the tune is caused by the length and tension of the strings; the sounding board and the whole instrument give, strengthen, or harmonize the secondary vibrations, or tone.

In the same way the motive power of the voice is applied at the middle of the body. The vocal bands, by changes in their length and tension, cause not only the fundamental

vibrations, but also the changes of pitch or tune. The pharynx primarily, but all the chambers, the muscular texture, the bones, in short, all parts of the body produce the resonance, sympathetic vibrations, or tone.

These three functions are fundamental. Each is discharged by a distinct mechanism, and cannot be transferred. To localize each of these functions is the first principle governing the right use of the voice. The speaker violates it when he cramps his throat and tries to make it the motor, so to speak, to force out his tone.

Again, the parts may be divided into those performing a passive, and those performing an active function. We do not normally play the violin upon the bow, but the bow upon the violin. Nor do we make voice normally by making the throat active. The tone passage and whole body are elastically passive. The reserve of the breath is sympathetically active. The voice, like every musical instrument, is delicate, and the tone must have room to vibrate with ease and freedom. Therefore, guard against constrictions and tightening of the throat muscles.

A good tone is always made easily. Even *loud, strong, and seemingly forcible tones*



can be made with as much ease as a big bell vibrates. It does not take great physical work to beat a drum. Too much work would ruin it. A beginner usually blows a bugle too hard, but too much breath makes only a wheeze. In the same way if a man tries to force a great deal of breath in making a tone, he only cramps his throat and fails to make it open and free to vibrate.

Tune up your whole being and body before you speak. Take breath in the middle of the body, open the throat, and the act of making tone will follow like the touch on the strings of a guitar or violin.

## 2. Harmoniously and sympathetically expand the chest.

Right expansion of the chest is the primary step in military training, and in all other kinds of training for the improvement of man's organism.

As we prepare to speak, the body expands naturally, and we take an extra amount of breath.

A common fault is the bending of the back and throwing the abdomen forward. Men are told to "draw in the stomach." Many



on account of such suggestions, hold the respiratory muscles mechanically rigid. I have found men who hold these parts so firm as to interfere with breathing and voice conditions. Such men often move the shoulders to get motive power for voice production, thus completely upsetting the normal conditions of voice and the freedom of the tone passage. If any one will expand the chest and not bend the back, but lift the chest forward and upward, he will find that "the stomach" is drawn in correctly, and the breathing muscles are left free.

We have two chief sets of muscles, the extensor muscles, which cause expansion, and the flexor muscles, which cause contraction. Activity in the extensor muscles is the best condition for voice and tone. It is not only far more dignified and healthful, but favors the conditions that take and reserve breath.

Extensor action begins in the chest. The soldier, therefore, should give careful attention to its position. He should, as Jean De Reske said, "carry the necktie high." A proper bearing is requisite for good tone—not labored and stiff, but an easy carriage, *with a certain sympathetic activity in all the extensor muscles of the body.*

The training for the soldier is not only important for soldierly bearing, good for the health, and suggests the courage and dignity becoming an officer, but it is also necessary for the right use of the voice. He should apply the principles of his training as a soldier to the improvement of his tones.

### 3. Stand tall.

When the chest is properly expanded, the whole body is elevated. With the arms free this activity causes a sense of tension, so to speak, between the balls of the feet and the summit of the chest, making the whole body elastic. It is like the stretch of the strings of a harp. This gives an easy spring to the walk, and this sympathetic action is one of the most fundamental conditions of voice.

Soldiers in training will receive great benefit by stretching themselves in the early morning, even before rising from their cots. This stretch between the summit of the chest and the balls of the feet equalizes the circulation, and removes any feeling of weariness. It will also help to tone up that vitality of the great central muscles of the body, and establish that condition which is the basis of *good voice*.

It must be remembered that the voice is practically a part of the whole body. In a piano the least imperfection in the sounding board, even a screw loose in the case, affects the tone. The whole body is the sounding board of the voice, and the sympathetic oneness of the body in response to feeling attunes the whole body to resonance.

A sense of tallness and of ease, and elevation of the body as a whole, enables the inspiratory muscles, especially the diaphragm, to be more free and elastic in their action, so that the tone comes out with greater fullness, roundness, and improved quality.

It helps also to think of the chest as an expanded, elastic, but immovable box, and to leave the muscles and parts in the centre of the body free to act.

#### 4. Keep the throat relaxed and open.

This is of great importance. It is curious how apt all are to pinch the throat. Unconsciously many tighten and squeeze the muscles of breathing to force out breath, and thus constrict the tone passage, for any cramp *of the breath* cramps also the throat. Some *labor under the illusion* that the whole work

is done at the throat, when this is but the free opening of the bugle through which the vibrations pass.

We need more breath than in ordinary life breathing reserved with a feeling of sympathetic, elastic fullness in the middle of the body, and a simultaneous relaxation and openness of the throat. These are fundamental conditions that lie at the very basis of effective speech. Do not try so much to speak loud, as to speak with fullness, openness, roundness, and smoothness. Whatever activity you increase, be sure it is in the middle of the body, making a reserve, not a constriction of the breathing. Never cramp the throat to get a stronger tone.

Observe your laughter. You find that its source is in the middle of the body, and when it is genuine and hearty you have more breath in the lungs than usual. In laughter we notice this activity is not labored, but elastic, even sympathetic.

Such activity in the middle of the body which is not constricted is the only way to open the throat properly for voice. In speaking, it is the pharynx, the region at the back of the tongue, rather than the front of the mouth that we wish to open. It can only be



opened by relaxation at the back of the tongue; openness comes of itself when we take and reserve breath properly. A right retention of breath causes a kind of sympathetic elastic activity through the middle of the body. The throat is simultaneously opened and the vocal bands act properly.

We can not pull our throats open. We have no muscles to do this. It opens of itself, naturally, normally, as a result of the right taking and reserve of breath in response to a right mental impression.

### 5. Study surprises, exclamations, laughter, and observe their fundamental characteristics.

We find that when we are suddenly surprised we expand and lift the body, take breath, and open the throat. All these are spontaneous results. We can take an exclamation like "Hark!" or a short, decided command of execution as "Halt!"—"Arm!"—or "March!" We can turn such commands into an exercise to develop primary conditions of tone.

A decided impression causes elevation of the chest, sympathetic reserve of breath, and *opening of the throat*, and then tone comes

out easily and with power. Such commands as "Halt!"—"Arm!"—or "March!" can be practiced first gently and then with great force. Thus we can find that the conditions of voice in an exclamation or surprise are accentuated, but are the same in the commands. In this way we can learn easily to increase the fundamental conditions of good tone.

The same is true of laughter. Mrs. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps Ward made Sam Lawson say of a joke, "It takes you right where you live." If we observe ourselves in genuine hearty laughter we notice that the activity centers in the middle of the body. In practicing laughter, therefore, we find one of the best exercises for voice. It causes us to have more breath in the lungs than usual, centers the breathing, and frees the throat.

That laughter does free and open the throat can be seen in the fact that if we have something in the mouth and we start to laugh, we cough. Why? Because we take breath suddenly for voice, the throat spontaneously opens, and the crumb "goes the wrong way."

By observing such natural, involuntary acts anyone can discover how to open his throat.



In fact, it is only by indirect or involuntary action that it can be opened at all. That is, it is only by co-ordination between right central action in breathing and the throat that the tone passage opens.

## 6. Breathe often.

Man breathes about 25,000 times a day. He takes 1000 meals of air an hour. Anything that interferes with this breathing injures health, and hinders in every way. We should take a new breath with every new idea. We can hardly breathe too often. After speaking let the breath release, but before every command, however quickly, take a fresh breath. Let there be a renewed lifting of the hammer for every stroke.

While breathing often we breathe not mechanically or by will, but in response to our thinking. Think, accordingly, every step of the command. Pause with every phrase and breathe freely, easily and naturally. Especially should there be a pause and a deep breath before the command of execution.

All the officers I have examined and observed in giving commands breathe too *selfdom*, take too little breath, or constrict and

hold the breath, especially between the command of preparation and the command of execution. Instead of taking breath for every phrase, they get activity by constricting what little breath they have. This cramps the throat. The tone is forced out with the pharynx and even the vocal bands constricted, and the result is sore throat.

Nothing brings quicker and worse results than wrong use of the voice. When we speak properly, all is free, easy and natural.

**7. Remember that loudness is not the chief cause of being heard at a distance.**

If you will try to throw your voice across a field to make someone hear at a distance, you will observe that if the listener does understand it is because of the way you reserve your breath and open your throat. You must have your chest expanded and have a great amount of reserved breath in the lungs, keeping it, so to speak, under the voice. This will act as a spring board, the throat spontaneously opens, and your voice will be carried to a surprising distance without labor or irritation. The tone will sound out like the *tones of a bell, or the notes of a bugle.* It

will be astonishingly easy and free. Try it, and you will be surprised at the result.

If two will go out in a field, some distance apart, and one will call to the other, they will easily discover the principle involved.

What are the reasons why one is heard at a distance?

First. Sympathetic retention of breath. The first reason is the amount of breath retained in the lungs. There is a normal amount of breath that projects tone as there is a normal amount of powder that projects the ball from the gun.

Second. Openness and purity of tone. Constricted tone, especially in the throat and in the breath, cannot be heard at a distance because it has no resonance of vibration. The tone should not only be open and free, but pure. A band can be heard playing at a long distance through all noise, while the clang of iron can be heard only a short distance, though close by it seems to be deafening. Nature loves to carry a pure tone. It has regularity of sound waves, and regular sound waves carry to a distance while irregular sound waves do not.

*Third. Proper quantity for vowels. The soul of speech is the vowel. It is the part*

of a word that vibrates and carries. When some syllables are slighted, and the vowel swallowed up, or smothered, the word is of course lost. Every vowel must have quantity to be carried to any distance.

The vowel, with its vibration, underlies the whole word. Give them, therefore, large quantity, with great freedom and openness. "Vowel" comes from the word "voice." "Consonant" is something "sounding with" voice. Yet we must not talk of consonants as being a hindrance.

Fourth. Distinctness in articulation. This means that an easy, decided character is given to every consonant. Distinctness must cause separation, not labor. Labored speech is never heard at a distance.

To turn "z" into "s" or voice consonants into disagreeable breath consonants, is one of the most common faults.

Many officers change the word "march" to "harch." I asked one why he did this, and he said because he did not have to close the mouth as in saying "march." As a matter of fact, "m" is the most relaxed and open of consonants. It is one of the most helpful consonants to begin with. It is much easier than "h." "H" is an aspirate; it



not even a letter. The real reason for this astonishing perverted idea is that they think they must force out breath, and it is easier to do this with "h." This waste of breath and constriction of the throat confuses the listener so that a command might be totally mistaken.

Fifth. Change of pitch between words. This is important to speakers, because when there is change of pitch between words they come with individuality to the ear.

Note that there must never be any change of pitch between the syllables of words. Each word in a command must be kept on a single plane.

In conversation there ought to be a change of pitch between words but in giving commands the tone must be kept on the same plane and the central vowels prolonged.

Sixth. Smoothness. All jerks, all harshness, tend to destroy the fullness of vibrations of the sound waves, and of course, prevent words from being heard.

It is curious that love will carry the voice farther than hate; sympathy will carry the voice farther than antagonism.

*Seventh. Volume.* This must not be construed as loudness. A certain richness of

sound is needed. Mere loudness is labored, and awakens no sympathy.

Eighth. Ease, repose, confidence, elastic sympathetic activity of the whole body. Often we are not heard at a distance on account of constrictions, jerks, impure tones, huskiness. Not only are these disagreeable, but they will not allow the commander to be heard at a distance.

**8. Change important words which are trochees to spondees.**

The word "Forward!" is a trochee, but in giving the command it is changed to a spondee. All the words of a command must have a certain unity which they gain by being given on one plane. Usually there is a long, slow, rising suspensive word or syllable in the command of preparation, while the command of execution has a decided falling inflexion upon one vowel. The word "Inspection" is given as three long syllables almost with equal accent and on one pitch.

The accent of a command is very different from that of conversation. In speaking and calling to a distance, however, we discover that this change is natural, and not purely conventional.



A pause after the command of preparation enables the men to understand more clearly. The pause must be sufficiently long, but during it the officer should not, as he frequently does, hold his breath and let his respiratory muscles become constricted. There should be a free spontaneous release of conditions, a new preparation, more breath and more openness of the throat just when the command of execution is given.

**9. Remember that pauses are a necessary part of all expression.**

Effective commands seem to be given in a stream. They are rather spoken in a series of pulsations, preceded by preparations and followed by releases. We think by successive pulsations in our minds. We give attention to one thing, then leap to another. If we expect to win attention we must speak in accordance with the rhythm of thinking.

What takes place during a pause? We receive an impression and prepare for speech. Then after speech we release conditions. This cannot be insisted upon too much. Each *phrase must be given a certain individuality, its preparation, its support, and its release.*

It demands new life, new thought, new breath, new opening of the throat.

Lack of instant release after an important phrase and a failure to renew breath before the next is a very common and serious misuse of the voice.

### 10. Be rhythmic.

All life acts rhythmically. We breathe rhythmically; we walk rhythmically; we talk, if we talk well, rhythmically. There is an alternation of pause and touch, or phrase accent, that is, of silence, with a greater force upon the central word of the following phrase.

Pause and speech in alternation is one of the chief elements of rhythm. This rhythm of speech in the giving of commands, should be in correspondence with the rhythm of the step, or the actions that are to be performed.

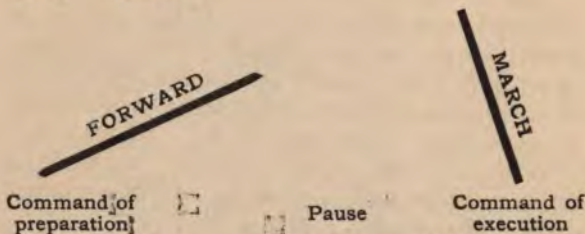
True rhythm brings ease, repose, and energy. Violation of rhythm brings weariness and weakness, not only in voice, but in bodily actions and health.

Speak with the rhythm of the action that is to be performed. If an officer gives a command in a tame, dragging way the soldiers receive no inspiration, or key to the

spirit of the movement. It is the same as if the drum should be tapped lightly and in the wrong rhythm.

11. Give the command of preparation with a long rising inflexion, and the command of execution with a long decided falling inflexion.

Inflection is of great help to the soldier. For example, the word "Forward!" should be given with a long easy sweep of the voice upward, followed by a pause, quick release, and taking of new breath, then a long, strong, abrupt falling inflection on the vowel of the word "March."



**This falling inflection must be abrupt and decided in order to initiate the movement of the whole squad or unit. There should be a pause to give the whole unit time to realize the direction. The command of preparation**

is important for all should understand it; the command of execution is important for all should obey it decidedly, at once, and together.

A firm, long falling inflexion in the command of execution is of great importance. One who has a poor ear should make a long rising inflection beginning on the ground and going away up gradually, then a long fall until the ear realizes the difference in direction. There should also be a realization of the difference of the long gradual inflections in the command of preparation and the abrupt fall in the command of execution.

The vowel in the command of execution demands special attention. This command must center in one vowel which is large, open and free. There will be a difference, of course, in artillery and infantry commands of execution. The size of the unit makes a difference, also many difficult conditions, such as noise and confusion, but the instinct of the officer soon realizes this.

In all commands there should be great openness and largeness of the central vowels of the important words, and all these conditions of voice must have their climax, especially in the command of execution.



The rhythmic alternation of central vowels of the central words of the phrase in the command of preparation secures attention. A pause between these phrases aids also in this. The soldier gets a key to the rhythm of the movement which he is to perform by the way the officer speaks, if the officer speaks properly. He also hears and understands the command better. He has time to comprehend the meaning and to prepare. Nature always responds to rhythm, and soldiers are no exception.

**12. Take a courageous but kindly attitude toward your men.**

Many officers give their commands with a haughty air; others as if condescending or patronizing. Try to increase the voice without making it disagreeable. Disagreeable tones do not carry, as has been said, and they certainly do not inspire. An unpleasant quality of voice is often due simply to constriction when the speaker does not intend to be harsh. True voice must always be sympathetic, indicating an attitude of dignity, *confidence*, and courage. The voice that will *inspire your fellowmen* must come from one

who has no contempt for his fellows nor for the soldiers under his command. He is a leader, but also a comrade. Let your voice express kindness, and confidence in others.

The importance of voice in commands has been vividly realized amid the noise of battle. The right command given in the right, courageous, cheerful, brave, inspiring tone of voice, in a way that can be heard, may be the cause of victory. Great events hinge upon little things. Not only the success of a movement, but the lives of men depend upon the command being given in the right spirit at the right moment.

Tone color is often ignored. Officers give commands sometimes that make the soldiers feel like rebelling, when the same command given in a different tone will inspire to action.

The influence of the right use of the voice is astonishing.

What pleasure is sometimes given by the tone of a beautiful voice. How many fail on account of a cold, hard, disagreeable quality of tone.

Voice is the revelation of a man's disposition. Right use of the voice is hardly possible without right feeling, right thinking and right attitude of mind toward others.



**13. Be careful of the every-day carriage of your body.**

The soldierly carriage is simply a correct, gentlemanly bearing for all men. Training to develop it should be a part of universal education. Every individual needs such discipline and development.

This every-day carriage of the body will improve the health and the sympathetic elasticity of the muscles. The voice will have a better sounding board, and as the texture of the body is more uniform, there will be better resonance, better vibration.

**14. Be careful of your voice in every-day conversation.**

We can not use the voice carelessly, indifferently and loosely in every-day life, and then all at once tone it up to a higher and more exalted function. The constant, habitual use of the voice should receive attention. Habit is second nature, and if we use our voices correctly in common conversation we will improve its character.

The voice is not a machine that can be built. It is an organism that must be developed. *It must improve gradually.* Once the correct

use of the voice is secured, then we are simply ready for its greater and constant improvement. Since the voice is an organism, it is subject to habit, and bad habits come upon us involuntarily, unconsciously.

### 15. Practice.

The voice, when the right steps are taken, can be greatly improved and improved easily. What is needed is attention and practice along the line of these suggestions. These should be taken as mere hints for self-study, not as rules. However, they embody the principles, even laws of nature. They are founded on psychology and physiology, and their truth can be proven.

The soldier needs special exhortation for practice. He does not know when he may be promoted. This may come suddenly. Hence he should give attention to his voice.

In some great emergency what an advantage has the man who can make his voice heard at a distance through the noise and confusion. What power it gives an officer who can give his commands in this strong, sympathetic, courageous, vigorous way. The very tone of his voice is a source of courage and inspiration.

When time hangs heavily on your hands give your attention to this practice.

When you wake in the morning, stretch, lying on your cot or upon the ground; no matter how uncomfortable your position, stretch. This is what every animal does. Take an attitude of joy. Turn on your back. Place one hand on the summit of the chest and the other on the middle of the back, and carry the chest forward and upward without bending the back. Then breathe freely and deeply several times. If you are where you will not disturb others, laugh or make a few very soft chuckling tones. Practice co-ordination in the simple vowels with as much breath in your lungs as possible, and with open, relaxed throat.

Then as you rise, go through a few more simple exercises. Expansion of the chest is good, also movement of the arms as in the "setting up" exercises such as are used at West Point. You will feel better, more courageous, and your voice will begin to improve.

When out walking, count rhythmically, speak, and release. Let the speaking be *easy, free*, not loud, and the release simple, *quiet, but decided*. Return to involuntary

breathing, and then take another breath. Practice slowly at first. You will develop co-ordinate conditions of voice in this way.

Speak poems. Learn by heart lines full of joyous exclamations, lyric poems, and recite them rhythmically, repeating many times with co-ordinate preparation, decided speech, and release.

Learn to sing. Gather a group of men together when nothing is doing. Start a song the others know. Remember these conditions are practically the same for speech as for singing. The tone must not be loud nor mechanical but easy and sympathetic.

Watch your laughter. Notice the ease with which some make tone. Study your breathing, and above all practice. Practice many things such as are not direct commands, but are easier and simpler.

Going off alone, or with one or two in a group, is most helpful. A good plan is to go off with one other and throw a command to a distance and see how far it is heard. Study to make it heard most easily.

The very first lesson you will learn will be the fact that when you speak easily, naturally, openly, freely, with plenty of breath in the lungs, in short, when you obey all the condi-



tions implied in these Hints, you can make yourself heard much more easily.

Practice will teach you more than anything else. You will be surprised at the possibilities of your voice if you can really get these principles imbedded in your mind. Always speak easily. Always center your speech in the middle of the body. Keep your throat open, the chest courageous, and expansion through the whole body with reposeful activity in the extensor muscles.

#### **16. Lastly, improve your voice.**

Not only because you are a soldier, but because you are a man. A good voice is the greatest help to success in any walk of life.

The foregoing are positive, many wish negative suggestions. Here are a few:

1. Never jerk. "Snap" is the result of reposeful, decided, harmonious, normal activity.
2. Never constrict either the throat or breathing or any part of the body.
3. Never lose the rhythm of your step or movements in giving the command.
4. Never be labored. Hard work is the use of the wrong muscle or right parts in the wrong way.

## AFTERWORD

These Hints are an endeavor to help at a time when everyone is called upon to do something. Several officers have travelled hundreds of miles to consult me regarding the troubles they have had with their voices in giving commands. My heart has gone out to many whom I could not help whom I have heard in training giving commands. Discouraging words have been dropped by many soldiers. Members of the regiments of different universities have complained that they could not understand commands given by prominent officers and trainers.

I received through the mail from several universities copies of a letter sent out by the Adjutant-General of the United States calling attention to the lack of voice on the part of applicants for commissions. These college officials seemed to point by the sending of these letters to one who has tried to teach about ten thousand to speak. The letter of the Adjutant-General was interesting reading. Its spirit is shown by the following paragraph:

A great number of men have failed at camp because of inability to articulate clearly. A man who cannot



